

Successfully Navigating the College Application Process:

Assisting your students through the rocket science of university admission

Five things students need to know about college admission

- ▶ They can be accepted.
- ▶ They are more than test scores
- ▶ They are in charge
- ▶ They are unique
- ▶ They are not alone

What are college admissions officers looking for in an applicant?

A Rigorous high school curriculum

- ▶ AP, IB and Honors courses taken
- ▶ Course sequences completed?
- ▶ Courses that show passion for chosen major
 - ▶ Independent projects outside of the classroom
 - ▶ Inquiring mind
- ▶ Grades that show strong effort and an upward trend
 - ▶ Which course to choose? Honors or regular?
- ▶ Ability to persevere

Solid scores on standardized tests

- ▶ The scores should be consistent with high school performance
- ▶ Practice before the test (just like a musician wouldn't just go on stage without practice)

A well written essay

- ▶ Provide insight into a student's unique personality, values and goals
- ▶ Outline how they will contribute to the college campus
- ▶ Essay should be well written
- ▶ Use authentic voice
- ▶ If the student struggled or had a bad semester, talk about it in the essay

Extracurricular Activities

- ▶ Passionate involvement in a few versus lukewarm involvement in many
- ▶ Demonstrated leadership and initiative
- ▶ Show commitment and determination
- ▶ Highlight special talents that contribute to the college's student life program
- ▶ Highlight ability to work well with others (73% from admissions officer survey)
- ▶ Community service (includes helping the family/taking care of siblings)
 - ▶ Highlight specific projects
- ▶ Work experience

Personal characteristics that contribute to a diverse and interesting student body

- ▶ Skills and talents
- ▶ Interests
- ▶ Geographic diversity
- ▶ Program interest
- ▶ Ability to pay (1/2 of institutions according to NACAC report)

Demonstrated intellectual curiosity

- ▶ Experience in personal study projects outside of class
- ▶ Ability to think and work independently
- ▶ Creativity

Demonstrated enthusiasm to attend the college

- ▶ Visit the campus
- ▶ Contact and stay in contact with your admission officer
- ▶ Demonstrate desire to enroll if accepted
 - ▶ Early decision
 - ▶ Give insight as to why they want to be at that college
- ▶ **DO NOT USE THE WRONG SCHOOL NAME IN YOUR APPLICATION** (essay, short answer questions, etc.)

Letters of recommendation that give evidence of integrity, special skills, positive character traits and an interest in learning

- ▶ Ask teachers who know them well
- ▶ Not just about academic strengths but also about qualities the student displays in class (leadership, initiative)

What is Holistic Admission?

- ▶ Building the class
- ▶ Less emphasis on academic metrics
- ▶ Making admission more personal
- ▶ Harvard considerations:
 - ▶ Growth and potential
 - ▶ Character and personality
 - ▶ Contribution to the Harvard Community

Pointers to remember

- ▶ Connect with your colleges
- ▶ Know your chances
- ▶ Take application instructions seriously
 - ▶ Only send documents they require
 - ▶ Send them in format requested
 - ▶ Do not go over word counts for essays or short answer questions
- ▶ BUT send what they request on time and well done
- ▶ Need to stand out amongst 1000s and 10,000s applicants
- ▶ If given the option to send in something “special” do so!
- ▶ Be smart in social media
- ▶ Sometimes legacies matter, sometimes they don't

It's not really rocket science - it's just about putting the best student applicant forward

References

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